

WASHINGTON, DC - On Wednesday, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 5350, legislation authored by Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA-03) and cosponsored by Representative Thelma Drake (R-VA-02) that would authorize the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange certain National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration property to the City of Norfolk.

The legislation is critical to Norfolk’s efforts to revitalize and redevelop the area in Downtown Norfolk known as the Fort Norfolk District.

Representative Scott and Representative Drake both represent portions of the City of Norfolk.

The measure passed by voice vote.

Representative Scott’s and Representative Drake’s floor statements, as prepared for delivery for debate on the bill from Monday, September 15th, are below:

MR. SCOTT of Virginia: Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 5350, a bill authorizing the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange certain National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration property in the City of Norfolk, Virginia. At the request of the City of Norfolk, I introduced this legislation in February of this year along with my colleague from Virginia’s 2nd Congressional District, Congresswoman Thelma Drake, who also represents part of the City of Norfolk.

Over the last decade, the City of Norfolk has experienced tremendous economic growth. Downtown Norfolk has reemerged as the urban center of the Hampton Roads region through revitalization and new commercial and residential development.

For several decades, NOAA has been an important Federal partner in Downtown Norfolk's development. NOAA's Atlantic Marine Operations Center and NOAA's Chesapeake Bay Office are both located Downtown in an area referred to as the Fort Norfolk District, which is one of the last remaining underdeveloped waterfront areas in Downtown.

Nearly a decade ago, the City recognized the strategic location of the Fort Norfolk District for redevelopment and revitalization, and the City began discussions about its desire to purchase a parcel of property from NOAA located at 538 Front Street, directly across from NOAA's primary Norfolk facility. NOAA

currently uses the property for storage and staff space for the Norfolk Field Operations Office of NOAA's National Geodetic Survey.

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These discussions stalled when NOAA ascertained that Congressional authorization was required in order to proceed.

H.R. 5350 simply authorizes – but does not require – the Secretary of Commerce to sell or exchange the NOAA property located at 538 Front Street in Norfolk to the City of Norfolk. The bill clearly states that NOAA may only sell or exchange the property if the Secretary of Commerce determines that the conveyance would be in the best interest of the Federal government.

The bill also requires that the property be sold at a value that is not less than the fair market value as determined by the Federal government.

The bill does not delineate or support any particular agreement or contract; the details of any future agreement between NOAA and the City of Norfolk would have to be worked out. This legislation would simply permit that process to move forward.

And if a mutually agreeable contract is decided upon, this land sale or exchange would allow Norfolk to continue its

tremendous economic growth by developing the land for commercial and residential purposes.

The authority granted to the Secretary of Commerce to enter into an agreement with the City of Norfolk will expire two years after the date of enactment of H.R. 5350.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Chairwoman of the Fisheries Subcommittee, Ms. Bordallo, and the Ranking Member Mr. Brown, as well as the Natural Resources Committee Chairman Mr. Rahall and Ranking Member Mr. Young for bringing this bill to the floor. I urge my colleagues to support this bipartisan legislation that protects the interests of both the Federal government and the citizens of Norfolk.

MRS. DRAKE: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be standing today in support of H.R. 5350, legislation that I sponsored along with Congressman Bobby Scott, which authorizes the sale or exchange of a specific tract of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) property located in Norfolk, Virginia. The sale of this NOAA land is something the City of Norfolk has been working on since 2005. I

am proud that this legislation is being considered today, as it will have a significant impact on the economic development of Norfolk.

Over thirty years ago, the federal government purchased 3.78 acres of land located at 538 Front Street in Norfolk for \$47,300. From this time forward, this prime, waterfront location has remained under-utilized – when the original intention for this land was to be the future site of NOAA’s regional headquarters.

Allowing the City of Norfolk to purchase this land for fair market value gives Norfolk a new area to continue redevelopment efforts that will foster job growth and economic opportunities for citizens in Hampton Roads. As Norfolk has experienced substantial economic growth since the time of the original purchase, I appreciate that this sale will finally be permitted to further ensure

Norfolk's future economic development efforts.

I am grateful for Rep. Scott's work on helping to bring this bill to the floor, as well as the work of the Committee on Natural Resources and I look forward to the great benefit this redevelopment effort will have for the people of Hampton Roads.

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